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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001275

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE/HARRIS; NSC FOR ABRAMS/WATERS;
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HEBRON REMAINS QUIET, THANKS TO RESPONSIVE
LEADERSHIP, FUNCTIONING ECONOMY, AND STRONG SOCIAL STRUCTURE

REF: JERUSALEM 607

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In June 12 conversations with the Consul General, the Hebron governor, the mayor of Hebron, and a Hebron-based Fatah PLC member noted that Hebron remains calm, despite on-going violence in Gaza and the areas, strong Hamas elements. Hebron Mayor Osaily stressed his priority to provide services and show Hebronites "another way." All noted the problems with Israeli settlers in downtown Hebron and suggested that easing access to the Old City would undermine support for Hamas. They stressed the need to maintain Hebron's economic access to Israel. All noted their appreciation for the USG's decision to resume the Eastern Hebron Bulk Water Project and urged more assistance in the southern West Bank. End summary.

12. (C) In a June 12 trip to Hebron (Note: Before the dramatic events of the past week in Gaza), Consul General and ConGenOffs met with the Governor of Hebron Areef al-Jabari, the newly appointed Mayor of Hebron Khalid Osaily, and Fatah PLC member Akram Haimoni. They all expressed concern about Gaza and stressed that they are working hard to keep the Hebron area quiet by encouraging moderate voices and providing services. Hebron is the West Bank's largest governorate (pop. 600,000), with 50 percent unemployment, strong Fatah and Hamas movements, and on-going problems with Israeli settlers, all of which make it a potential powder keg. They stressed the strong social fabric of Hebron where the clans have largely stayed out of politics, unlike in Gaza where the clans are part of the violence.

13. (C) Governor Jabari stressed his activist approach to countering extremists. When Osaily was appointed mayor by PA President Abbas in April (Hebron's municipal elections are scheduled for the fifth round), Jabari said he confronted the opposition from the Islamic forces who had reservations about Osaily and pointed to the value of having a mayor of his caliber. (Note: Osaily had served on the City Council since 1976 and as Deputy Mayor and Acting Mayor. He resigned in 2005 to run for the PLC on the Third Way national list (number three after Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi). Notwithstanding his long public service career, he is better known as a successful businessman. He is a long-standing contact of the Consulate. End note.) Osaily stressed that he wants to show Hebronites "another way" and that development and politics can go hand-in-hand. He described the recent opening of a new USD 5 million wholesale agricultural market in southern Hebron that was 100 percent financed by the municipality. Less than two months after its opening, he proudly said, they had already recouped USD 3 million of the investment after selling shops to the traders.

¶4. (C) Both Jabari and Osaily noted downtown Hebron's problems with Israeli settlers. Osaily said he wants H2 "to come back to life" since the Israeli-controlled electronic gates to the Old City effectively make it a ghost town with 1,800 shops closed and 1,000 homes empty. PLC member Haimoni noted that opening access to the Old City before the next election will undermine Hamas, support. He stressed the need to support Hebron,s moderates.

¶5. (C) Osaily asked for USG assistance to ensure that the new Israeli crossing at Tarqumiya, with a USAID-funded container scanner, does not become "another Karni/al-Mintar." Hebron is quiet, he argued, largely because it still has an operating economy with access to Israel, so "don't destroy the economy," he stressed. He pressed for certain road closures to be lifted to facilitate easy access to the crossing, including the opening of the industrial estate's front gate (reftel), access to Route 35 from Hebron, and from Hebron south to Yatta.

¶6. (C) Jabari and Osaily welcomed the decision to resume the Easter Hebron Bulk Water (Bani Naim) Project. The Governor he said he will personally ensure security at the site. Both requested donor support for infrastructure and job creation/income generation projects.

¶7. (C) All said they thought Hamas would win fewer seats if an election were held today in Hebron. (Note: Hamas won all nine constituency seats when numerous Fatah and Fatah-aligned independents split the secular vote.) Both Jabari and Haimoni admitted that Fatah had not made much progress in reforming itself. Osaily stressed his belief that it is all about services and noted that Hamas supporters

JERUSALEM 00001275 002 OF 002

now ask for his help, saying, "The more services that you provide, the more they will vote for you."
WALLES